

The Balloon Priest
(Padre Baloneiro)
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True

(20 April 2008, Atlantic Ocean, Brazil) A Catholic priest recently ascended to heaven on a host of helium *party balloons*, paying homage to [Lawn Chair Larry's aerial adventure](#). Larry, the beloved survivor of a Darwin-worthy fiasco, attached 45 helium *weather balloons* to his lawnchair, packed a picnic lunch, and cut the tether--but instead of drifting above the Los Angeles landscape as planned, he was rocketed into LAX air traffic lanes by the lift of the weather balloons. Astoundingly, Larry survived the flight.

Adelir Antonio, 51, was not so lucky.

His audacious attempt to set a world record for clustered balloon flight was intended to publicize his plan to build a spiritual rest stop for truckers. But, as truckers know, sitting for 19 hours in a lawn chair is not a trivial matter even in the comfort of your own backyard. The priest took numerous safety precautions, including wearing a survival suit, selecting a buoyant chair, and packing a satellite phone and a GPS. However, the late Adelir Antonio made a fatal mistake.

He did not know how to use the GPS.

The winds changed, as winds do, and he was blown inexorably toward open sea. He could have parachuted to safety while over land, but chose not to. When the voyager was perilously lost at sea, he prudently phoned for help--but rescuers were unable to determine his location, since he could not use his GPS. He struggled with the unit as the charge on the satellite phone dwindled.

Instead of a GPS, the priest let God be his guide, and God guided him straight to heaven. Bits of balloons began appearing on mountains and beaches. Ultimately the priest's body surfaced, confirming that he, like Elvis, had left the building.

The kicker? It's a Double Darwin. Catholic priests take vows of celibacy. Since they voluntarily remove themselves from the gene pool, the entire group earns a mass Darwin Award. Adelir Antonio wins twice over!

A One Track Mind
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(16 July 2008, Italy) Gerhard, 68, was queued at a traffic light in his Porsche Cayenne sports car. Before one reaches the light, there is a railroad crossing, and Gerhard had not let the queue progress forward far enough before he drove onto the tracks. As you might imagine, given [Murphy's Law](#), a train was coming.

The safety bars came down, leaving the Porsche trapped on the rails. According to witnesses, it took the driver awhile to realize he was stuck. Finally he jumped from the car and started to run--straight toward the oncoming train, waving his arms in an attempt to save his sportscar!

The attempt was partly successful. The car received less damage than its owner, who landed 30 meters away. Attempts to revive him were unsuccessful.

The moral of the story? Momentum always wins.

Early Retirement Plan
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(24 August 2008, Indonesia) Charles had everything going for him when he flew to Jakarta to visit his family. He had just completed his International Baccalaureate at King William's College in the Isle of Man, and his dreams were ambitious. In the school yearbook, he said he planned retire by the age of 30. The principal of the college later described him as "a very bright boy with a very bright future."

Unfortunately for Charles, his elite education omitted an important lesson from the curriculum: Electricity, danger of.

He had one foot in the backyard swimming pool (really!) when he noticed a cement box near the edge of the pool. It was full of electrical wires supplying power to the jacuzzi. Curious, Charles started to fiddle with a fistful of wires. He was immediately rooted to the spot by 240 volts of electrical current surging through his body.

Early retirement, indeed!

A post-mortem examination determined that Charles' death was "due to electrocution as a consequence of external grounding of current through the body while partially immersed in water." The 18-year-old's body was repatriated to the Isle of Man.

An Illuminating Story
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(26 February 2008, France) A 71-year-old pensioner met a shocking end when his frugal attempt to illuminate his yard with power siphoned from the National Grid backfired spectacularly.

The gentleman in question illegally opened a major power junction box at the front of his house, intending to hard-wire a cable to his garden shed. Unfortunately, the poor chap attempted to do this rewiring during a major downpour.

The fatal result was all too predictable. He was immediately deep fried and declared deceased at the scene.

Lessons:

- 1--Don't hardwire your shed to a local power substation
- 2--Don't hardwire your shed to a power line... in the rain!
- 3--There is such a thing as being *too frugal*.

A Screw Loose
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(14 April 2008, Texas) A contract worker was hired to install reinforcement bars on a communications tower near Camp Bullis. He was wielding power tools high above the ground, when two other workers saw him lean back and fall 225 feet to his death. Turns out, the man had loosened the bolts on the bar to which he was attached.

Police are calling it a tragic accident.

Wheel Of Fortune
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Unconfirmed by Darwin

(Winter 1995, Michigan) During the ski season at Sugarloaf Resort, a new lift operator was assigned to work the bottom of Lift 2. He was greatly impressed by the bull wheel that turned slowly above his head. The giant spokes on the wheel were impossible to resist. He grabbed onto a spoke and did a few pull-ups while the wheel turned.

After entertaining himself in this manner for a while, he decided to try this trick on the outer rim of the wheel. His timing was off. He did not drop down in time. Caught between the wheel and the lift cable, he was sliced in twain during this fateful final trip around the bull wheel

Rub the Mint
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Unconfirmed by Darwin

(December 1988, Romania) I was a student of electricity and mechanics in Communist Romania. At the time, it was mandatory for all children, including university students, to boost the economy by 'active participation.' Each autumn we worked in agriculture, harvesting fruits and vegetables, and for three weeks per year we were required to train in a power plant or factory, to get a feel for successful communist industry. This was known as "Rub The Mint".

My class was sent to Slatina where aluminum was obtained with the old power-hungry electrolysis process. We were not much use, so we were ignored by the people in charge of our 'training.' We spent the down time reviewing our class notes. Not only were the students bored, but so were many workers in the factory, who were actually *paid* for doing nothing.

One day I was assigned to walk documents from one department to another. On the way, I spotted two men crafting a wooden coffin. I was accustomed to all kinds of crazy sights, but a coffin... intriguing. Was the aluminum factory branching out into funeral supplies? No. "The coffin is for a comrade who accidentally removed himself from the gene pool," the woodcrafters told me.

Two recent hires, men in their twenties, were fiddling with the pressurized air hose used to power industrial air tools. They swept the dust off their dusty clothes; this was so much fun, one of them dropped his pants to feel the air sweep across his testicles. He bent further, and bet his comrade that he had the guts to pressurize his guts, and maybe have some fun farts. He proceeded to stick the hose in his anus and release six bar (atmospheres) of pressure, inflating and rupturing his colon and intestines.

He died within minutes from massive internal hemorrhage. He would not have survived even if he had pressurized himself in a hospital corridor. The autopsy revealed that the deceased had ruptured several meters of his colon and intestines. He was later found to have broken (heh) internal (heh) regulations. His 'scientific collaborator' stated that he did not believe his comrade would be so stupid as to proceed, and thought he was only goofing off.

Low Flying Drunk
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Unconfirmed by Darwin

(1996, Canada) Sleeping residents of Chilliwack were awakened early one morning by the sound of a small aircraft flying lower than usual. The engine noise was like a mosquito, zooming too close too quick, then veering away. What the bleep was going on?

In the wee hours of the night, during a bout of heavy drinking, two future Darwin Award nominees concluded that, with neither had a pilot's license nor flight training, they nevertheless knew enough to pilot an aircraft. knew all they needed to know to at a local dive, They drew the obvious conclusion, and decided to take a plane from the small local airport for a drunken joyride over the city. They invited two females along for the ride; fortunately, the level-headed ladies declined.

From idea to execution, the plan evolved quickly. One of the gentlemen worked at the airport and had access to the tarmac. The two men then managed to unlock a plane and get it off the ground and into the sky. They went on to buzz around in the dark, skimming above the roofs of the houses. This went on for an extended period of time.

Eventually they decided to land. They attempted to land on the grassy median between east and west-bound lanes of the Trans Canada Highway. They almost made it under the electrical wires that cross the median. Almost. Where these wires were concerned, fate intervened. Instead of making a soft landing on the grassy verge, the tail clipped the wires, sending the aircraft diving nose-first into the ground and killing both occupants.

Only then were the sleepy Chilliwack residents able to return to their REM sleep

Best Supporting Actor
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(9 October 2008, South Africa) For several days Johannesburg office workers watched a demolition worker slowly chip away at a pillar supporting the concrete slab above him. One observer said, "I wondered how they would drop that section." The walls were gone, and only the supporting pillars remained.

Dozens of observers watched the slow and senseless demolition proceed. Finally the only possible outcome concluded this epic battle. The besieged support collapsed, crushing man and machine beneath a pile of rubble. Ishmael Makone, 52, was killed instantly inside the cab of his mini-excavator.

"I cannot believe they did not foresee this," said a shocked witness who did not foresee this. Observers said they had been concerned about the workers' safety for several days. "There was no common sense"

Payback
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(27 December 2008, Serbia) 23-year-old Strahinja Raseta was wanted by Croatian police for murder, as well as for a spectacular robbery of a central post office. He fled to Serbia to evade the law.

But even bad guys have friends. Raseta had a friend, and his friend had lent him E15,000. Some loans can never be repaid. This was such a loan. Finding himself unable to earn or steal the funds needed to reimburse his friend, Raseta attempted to end the matter in another way--by murdering the lender!

He crawled under his creditor's Jeep and planted an explosive. However, the muffler was still hot, and the heat set off the explosive while Raseta was beneath the vehicle. He died in hospital the next day in the Serbian capital city of Belgrade, illustrating the truth of the Shakespearean adage, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

Organ Donors
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(3 February 2008, California) Two dirtbikes, two drivers, two passengers. Zero helmets, zero headlights, and a new moon. Four friends were tearing around on private land, where helmets and lights are not required. The Highway Patrol said the two couples were killed when their bikes collided between 1:30 and 3:30 AM in Modesto.

Emergency room workers have a name for people who ride dirtbikes without a helmet. They're called 'Future Organ Donors' and that is the only career now possible for Thomas, 33, Michael, 33, Kelly, 30, and Cynthia, 29.

Shopping Cart Crash
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Confirmed True by Darwin

(8 March 2008, Florida) Just because you see it online does not mean it's a good idea. Cameron, 18, was joyriding in a shopping cart as he held onto a moving SUV. An eyewitness said, "It's irresponsible behavior, but what do you expect from kids?" The car and the cart went over a speed bump and the cart overturned, ejecting its occupant, who was not wearing the little seat belt. Cameron was pronounced dead at the scene.

Into the Abyss
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Unconfirmed by Darwin

An enterprising lumberman had felled a large tree, and needed to haul it up a steep embankment. So he jacked up the rear end of his pickup and swapped one of the rear tires for a bare rim. He attached one end of a rope to the rim, and the other end of the rope to the felled tree. He put the pickup into gear, expecting the rim to act as a makeshift rope crank that would pull the tree up the embankment, saving him lots of sweat.

A great idea? Not if you're reading it here! You see, the tree vastly outweighed the truck. The man was standing with one foot on the ground and the other foot on the accelerator. When he gunned the engine, the tree acted like an anchor, and the truck yanked itself backwards. The open door rammed into him, and he was swept over the embankment along with the pickup.

When the dust settled, our lumberman had entered the great beyond. But his escapade served as a warning to others. The next lumberman cut up the tree where it lay, and carried it off.

Going to Seed
2008 Darwin Award Nominee
Unconfirmed by Darwin

(2008) Darren was dumb even for a junkie, but what he lacked in IQ he made up in creativity. In the supermarket, he notice a bag labeled "Birdseed 100% Poppy Seed." He seized his chance to circumvent the stranglehold of the International Drug Cartels with the following logic: 100% Poppy Seed = 100% Opium! Figuring he was onto something good, he bought a bag of birdseed, boiled it into a thick black paste, and proceeded to inject it into his vein.

Nothing happened, so he did it again.

An hour later, he was brought unconscious to our Emergency Department, as sick as it is possible to be. His chest X-ray showed thousands of tiny seed-like objects scattered throughout his lungfields. Our working diagnosis was Miliary Tuberculosis, so-called because the TB deposits resemble millet seeds. Little did we know!

Only two weeks later, after he recovered from life-threatening septicaemia and multiple organ failure, did the true story emerge. Darren survived, but subsequently died of a garden variety overdose.